

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4006
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
DIA WASHDC
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
COMSIXTHFLT
SHAPEUSNR
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY
USDOCOSOUTH
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 12347

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS STALLED IN SEARCH OF A "CONSENSUS"
CANDIDATE

REF: ROME 12007

SUMMARY. TEN VOTES ON SEVEN SUCCESSIVE DAYS OF BALLOTING
HAVE FAILED TO PRODUCE THE POLITICAL CONSENSUS NEEDED TO
ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT. BEHIND THE SCENES, POLITICAL
LEADERS ARE ENGAGED IN INTENSIVE DISCUSSION TO FIND A
CANDIDATE CAPABLE OF RECEIVING THE BROAD SUPPORT NEEDED
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TO PRESERVE THE EXISTING POLITICAL FRAMEWORK.
A BASIC ISSUE HAS EMERGED.
SHOULD THE NEXT PRESIDENT BE PERCEIVED AS FAVORING
THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE--BRINGING THE PCI INTO GOVERN-
MENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE? ALTERNATIVELY, SHOULD HE
BE A "NEUTRAL"-- ONE ELECTED WITH NO ACCOMPANYING
UNDERSTANDING (PERCEIVED OR REAL) TO FURTHER THE

PCI'S ADVANCEMENT? THE TIME REQUIRED TO ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT WILL DEPEND IN LARGE MEASURE ON HOW THE PARTIES DECIDE TO APPROACH THIS DISTINCTION. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER TEN VOTES IN SEVEN SUCCESSIVE DAYS OF BALLOTING, A CONSENSUS HAS NOT YET TO EMERGE BEHIND ANY CANDIDATE, AND THE SITUATION REMAINS STALLED. IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, THE DAILY BALLOTING HAS BECOME A MECHANICAL PROCESS DEVOID OF ANY SURPRISES. BEHIND THE SCENES, POLITICAL LEADERS ARE ENGAGED IN INTENSIVE CONTACTS AND MEETINGS IN SEARCH OF AN ACCEPTABLE, BROKERED SOLUTION.

2. THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WAS MARKED BY SOCIALIST LEADER CRAXI'S EARLY CALL FOR AGREEMENT TO ELECT A PSI CANDIDATE. AT FIRST, CRAXI CALLED ON THE OTHER PARTIES TO SELECT A PSI PRESIDENT FROM A ROSTER OF SOCIALIST POSSIBILITIES. HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT WORD THAT THE PCI WAS PREPARING TO COME OUT IN SUPPORT OF PERTINI, THE 82-YEAR OLD FORMER PSI PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER, FORCED CRAXI'S HAND, AND ON SUNDAY, JULY 2, THE PSI OFFICIALLY NOMINATED PERTINI AS THEIR CANDIDATE. THE PCI'S SUPPORT FOR PERTINI, HOWEVER, IMMEDIATELY LABELED HIM AS AN "HISTORIC COMPROMISE" CANDIDATE. THE PCI'S MOVE WAS THEREFORE SEEN AS DIRECTED AGAINST CRAXI AND HIS

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PSI "AUTONOMOUS" POLICY OF INDEPENDENCE FROM THE DC AND PCI. CRAXI WAS ABLE TO COUNT ON THE DC, HOWEVER, TO SHOOT DOWN PERTINI'S CANDIDACY (TO THE DC, PERTINI IS TOO CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PCI). THE DC SAID IT WOULDN'T MIND SUPPORTING A PSI CANDIDATE CAPABLE OF OBTAINING BROAD POLITICAL CONSENSUS, BUT WOULDN'T BE DICTATED TO AS TO WHICH CANDIDATE IT HAD TO ELECT. THE FIRST VETOING BY ONE OF THE THREE PRINCIPAL VOTING BLOCKS (DC, PCI AND LAY PARTIES) WAS THUS EXERCIZED BY THE DC WHICH DECLARED PERTINI UNACCEPTABLE. CRAXI UNDOUBTEDLY BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF.

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3. THE PARTIES ARE NOW ENGAGED IN A SECOND PHASE--
THE SEARCH FOR AN ALTERNATIVE LAY PRESIDENTIAL CANDI-
DATE. APPARENTLY IN ORDER TO BLOCK A NEW PCI INITIA-
TIVE, THE PSI HAS NOT YET FORMALLY WITHDRAWN PERTINI'S
CANDIDACY. PERTINI HIMSELF, HOWEVER, TOLD THE PRESS
ON JULY 4 THAT HIS CANDIDACY HAD FALLEN. AT THIS
POINT, THE REPUBLICANS DECIDED TO LAUNCH VETERAN PARTY
LEADER LA MALFA. HE WOULD BE AVAILABLE, THEY SAID,
PROVIDED THE PSI WITHDREW PERTINI. THE DC, ALTHOUGH
NOT ENTHUSIASTIC OVER LA MALFA FOR HIS SUPPORT OF PCI
ENTRY IN GOVERNMENT AS "INEVITABLE," SAID THEY COULD
VOTE FOR THE PRI LEADER PROVIDED HE OBTAINED BROAD
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SUPPORT FROM THE OTHER PARTIES (I.E., THE PSI). THEREIN
LAY THE SNAG. LA MALFA IS ANATHEMA TO CRAXI, AND THE
PSDI AND PLI ALSO IMMEDIATELY VOICED SUPPORT FOR
THE PSI'S EFFECTIVE VETO OF LA MALFA AS AN UNACCEPTABLE
"HISTORIC COMPROMISE" CANDIDATE. PSDI
SECRETARY ROMITA TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT HIS PARTY
WOULD NOT SUPPORT LA MALFA FOR THIS VERY REASON. THE
PCI, STILL OFFICIALLY TIED TO PERTINI, HAS NOT COMMENTED,
BUT WOULD PROBABLY BE PREPARED TO SUPPORT LA MALFA.
UNLESS LA MALFA CAN OVERCOME THE PSI'S VETO, HOWEVER,

HIS CANDIDACY DOES NOT LOOK PROMISING.

4. COMMENT: WITH THE SITUATION AT LEAST OUTWARDLY FROZEN, POLITICAL LEADERS APPEAR TO BE DOUBLING THEIR BEHIND-THE-SCENES EFFORTS. A "COLLEGIAL" MEETING OF SIX PARTY SECRETARIES WILL BE HELD ON JULY 5 TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM. A BASIC ISSUE HAS EMERGED. SHOULD THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF ITALY BE PERCEIVED AS ONE WHO FAVORS THE "HISTORIC COMPROMISE"--BRINGING THE PCI INTO GOVERNMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE? ALTERNATIVELY, SHOULD HE BE A "NEUTRAL" PRESIDENT--ONE ELECTED WITH NO ACCOMPANYING UNDERSTANDING (PERCEIVED OR REAL) TO FURTHER THE PCI'S CLAIM TO FORMAL PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT? NEITHER OF THE THREE POLITICAL GROUPINGS--THE DC, THE PCI, AND LAY PARTIES, APPEARS DISPOSED TO ELECT A CANDIDATE NOT SUPPORTED BY THE OTHERS. TO DO SO WOULD BE TO WEAKEN, PERHAPS IRREPARABLY, THE EXISTING POLITICAL FRAMEWORK. EACH OF THE GROUPINGS THUS HOLDS AN EFFECTIVE VETO IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION PROCESS. THE DC VETOED PERTINI BECAUSE HE LOOKED TOO MUCH LIKE A PCI-SUPPORTED CANDIDATE OF THE "COMPROMESSO." THE PSI APPEARS TO BE VETOING LA MALFA FOR THE SAME REASON. OTHER
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CANDIDATES, SUCH AS GIOLITTI (PSI), FANFANI (DC), AND PAOLO ROSSI (PSDI) ARE BEING PRESENTED AS "NEUTRAL" CONTENDERS IN THE SENSE THAT THEIR ELECTION WOULD NOT BE PERCEIVED AS FAVORING THE PCI. BUT EVEN SO-CALLED "NEUTRAL" CANDIDATES HAVE QUALITIES OR BACKGROUNDS THAT MAKE THEM MORE OR LESS ACCEPTABLE TO EACH OF THE THREE GROUPINGS. THE TIME REQUIRED TO ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT WILL THEREFORE DEPEND IN LARGE PART ON HOW MUCH THE PARTIES WILL BE WILLING TO COMPROMISE ON THEIR OBJECTIVES. AT THIS POINT NO SOLUTION IS IN SIGHT. GARDNER

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